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ABSTRACT

This study examined heterosexual college students attitudes toward gay men and lesbians, and in what types of situations were negative feelings expressed toward gay men and lesbians. A random sample of 224 residence hall students at the University of Maryland College Park completed the Situational Attitude Scale Sexual Orientation Survey, which includes questions based on 10 personal, social, and academically oriented situations. Three versions of the survey were randomly distributed, identical except that questions in Form A referred to "student," Form B referred to "gay male student," and Form C referred to "lesbian student." The study found that heterosexual male and female students reported more negative attitudes toward both gay males and lesbians than toward students whose sexual orientation was not disclosed, with deeper homophobic feelings held by male students than female students toward gay men. The magnitude of discomfort felt by heterosexual students toward gay males and lesbians varied across situations, but all students felt outrage when a gay male, lesbian, or student whose sexual orientation was not specified was physically assaulted. The results indicated that even the simplest of social interactions with gay male or lesbian students might elicit feelings of anxiety and concern among heterosexual students. (Contains 39 references.) (MDM)

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Attitudes of Heterosexual Students Toward their Gay Male and Lesbian Peers

Catherine McHugh Engstrom, & William E. Sedlacek

Research Report # 3-95

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Summary

A sample of 550 heterosexual residence hall students at the University of Maryland were administered a version of the Situational Attitude Scale (SAS) assessing their attitudes toward gay and lesbian students. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three forms, a control form which did not mention sexual orientation, a gay male form or a lesbian form. Results showed that heterosexual students reported more negative attitudes toward both gay male and lesbian peers than toward students whose sexual orientation was not disclosed in a variety of social academic and family situations.

Incidents of gay males, lesbians, and bisexuals who face prejudice, violence, victimization, and defamation on college campuses because of their sexual orientation have been widespread and well documented in recent years (Berrill, 1992; D'Augelli, 1989a, 1989b; Herek, 1989; National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Institute, 1992; Palmer, 1993; Rhoads,1995; Sedlacek,1995). For example, nearly three-fourths of the gay male and lesbian students surveyed in a study conducted by D'Augelli (1989b) reported that they had experienced verbal insults, one-fourth reported being physically threatened, and one-half expressed concerns about their personal safety. In addition, almost all participants indicated that they had not reported these incidents to authorities for fear of additional harassment or lack of follow-up. The gay and bisexual male college students in Rhoad's study (1995) shared vivid incidents of being assaulted at parties, beaten at downtown nightclubs, harassed in residence halls, and alienated in their classes. One gay male described an unprovoked assault, resulting in an injury requiring 18 stitches, as he walked home one evening with his boyfriend. Rhoads (1995) commented that "the stories of discrimination and harassment seem endless" (p. 71).

In a study conducted by Lopez and Chism (1993) that investigated campus and classroom experiences of gay and lesbian students, hostile incidents reported ranged from the destruction of posters advertising gay, lesbian, and bisexual events to being subjected to offensive remarks such as "hey, faggot" or "bash them back into the closet" (p. 99). The authors commented that the gay male and lesbian students were surprised at the level of student ignorance regarding sexual identity and the stereotypes held by heterosexual students. Gay male and lesbian students also experienced feelings of alienation by peers in the residence halls and in their academic program. They shared that they were afraid to reveal their sexual identity to their professors for fear of retaliation in how they would be treated and graded and they were frustrated by faculty who failed to react to homophobic remarks.

Rhoads (1995) emphasized the need for student affairs professionals to raise issues that bring to the surface underlying tensions and hostilities held by many students toward gay men. Understanding the attitudes of students toward gay male and lesbian students is a critical component in understanding the verbal and physical harassment of gay and lesbian students over the past decade (Ficarrotto, 1990). Herek (1988) reported that attitudes of heterosexual peers toward lesbian and gay students have not been favorable. Some studies have indicated that heterosexual men hold more negative feelings than heterosexual women toward gay men and lesbian women (D'Augelli & Rose, 1990; Herek, 1988; Simoni, 1996; Yarber & Lee, 1983). In two studies done with resident assistants (RAs), male RAs held significantly more negative attitudes than did female RAs toward gay men (D'Augelli, 1980a; Sanford & Engstrom, 1995). The research consistently shows heterosexual men have significantly stronger negative feelings toward gay men than they hold toward lesbian women (Gentry, 1987; Herek, 1988, Kite, 1984; Whitley, 1988). The results concerning heterosexual women's attitudes toward gay men or lesbians have differed across studies. Some studies reported that women express more negative feelings toward lesbians than toward gay men (gentry, 1987; Whitley, 1988) but Herek (1988) and Kite (1984) found that women regarded gay men and lesbians similarly.

The frequently cited works on attitudes toward gay male and lesbian students (D'Augelli, 1989a, 1989b; Herek, 1988; Simoni, 1996). used the Attitudes Toward Lesbian and Gay Men (ATLGM) scale (Herek, 1988). However, the questions in the ATLGM instrument (e.g., "Female homosexuality is a sin." Lesbians are sick.") do not offer insight into the type of situations in which prejudice or harassment might occur in a college setting. In addition, the socially desirable or "politically correct" responses in the ATLGM questionnaire are evident.

The researchers in this present study have built upon the work of Herek (1988), D'Augelli (1989a, 1989b), D'Augelli and Rose (1990), and Simoni (1996). Unlike the

ATLGM questionnaire, this study uses a design and a measure wherein socially desirable responses are not easily discernible (Sedlacek & Brooks, 1976). The Situational Attitude Survey (SAS) design responds to Gaertner and Dovidio's (1986) contention that the "rednecked" display of discrimination often has been replaced by our society by a more subtle, aversive form of bias (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986, p.62). They defined "aversive racists" (p. 62) as individuals who perceive themselves as void of prejudice and discriminatory behaviors. Another perspective is that aversive racists do hold negative feelings and ideas about certain groups of people but exclude these attitudes from their consciousness so that they can uphold their self-image as persons who espouse equity, dignity, and fairness. this description of aversive racists suggests a rationale for an instrument that can identify both conscious and subconscious attitudes and feelings held toward a particular group that may be vulnerable to stereotypes and oppression.

In addition, the previous studies examining student attitudes toward gay male and lesbian students do not provide information about specific situations in the college experience that elicit prejudices from heterosexual college students toward their gay male and lesbian peers. It is particularly important to identify the type of situations in the college experience in which prejudice might surface because those who hold such attitudes (heterosexual college students) and potential targets of harmful attitudes and behaviors (gay male and lesbian students) may not be able to identify such situations for themselves (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986).The current study contributes to our understanding in this area, with particularly important implications for practitioners who are concerned about creating positive attitudes toward students from diverse backgrounds and cultures.

The specific research questions investigated in this study were the following: (a) do heterosexual college students at a large southeast university hold stereotypical negative attitudes toward gay men and lesbians, and (b) in what type of situations are negative feelings expressed toward gay men and lesbians?

METHOD

Participants

Participants were a random sample of 550 residence hall students drawn at a large southeast university. Two hundred and twenty eight persons completed and returned the SAS Sexual Orientation survey. Four of these 228 individuals who completed the survey indicated that they were gay, lesbian, or bisexual and, therefore, were not included in the analysis. Thus, the total of 224 usable surveys represents a 50% return rate.

Demographic data on the participants who returned the survey showed that 109 (49%) were male and 115 (51%) were female. The racial background of the sample was 175 White students (78%), 18 African American students (8%), 16 Asian American students (7%), 7 Hispanic students (3%), and 8 students (4%) indicated "other" or did not indicate their racial background. The class rank distribution was as follows: 88 freshmen (39%); 86 sophomores (38%); 38 juniors (17%), 10 seniors (5%), and 2 individuals who did not report their class standing.

Procedures

Students were mailed a cover letter, survey, and enclosed return envelope using campus mail. The students were randomly assigned and given either the neutral form which did not specify sexual orientation (Form 1), the gay male form (Form 2) or the lesbian form (Form 3). Participation was voluntary. Students who completed their surveys within 10 days were eligible for three gift certificates at the campus bookstore. A reminder was sent to study participants who had not returned the survey within 10 days and three weeks after the original surveys were distributed.

Instrumentation

The SAS Sexual Orientation Survey was used to measure the attitudes of residence hall students toward gay male and lesbian college students. The 10 personal, social, and academically-oriented situations in this instrument were generated from information gathered in three arenas. First, a thorough review of the literature helped

identify salient stereotypes and types of prejudice reported toward gay male students and three lesbian students to gain their perspective about the prejudice and stereotypes they or other gay male and lesbian students faced. Finally, the first author reviewed drafts of this instrument with both the gay and lesbian student group and a multicultural awareness peer-educator group on campus. These groups provided feedback regarding the appropriateness and relevance of the instrument's situations and wording. The 10 situations are reproduced in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

In this instrument design, each situation was followed by 10 bipolar adjectives (e.g., happy-sad; disapproving-approving; good-bad). Participants expressed their reaction toward each situation by indicating a point on a semantic differential scale (a Likert-type scale of 1 to 5) that best captured the magnitude of their reactions (Osgood, Suci, & Tannenbaum, 1957). Therefore, this instrument had 10 items that served as the dependent variable. Each situation was self-descriptive, was considered separately and as a unit (Sedlacek, 1996).

In order to identify overt and subtle attitudes toward gay male and/or lesbian college students, and control for social desirable responses, the authors created three identical forms, with the exception that in each situation Form A referred to "student," Form B referred to "gay male student," and Form C referred to "lesbian student." Respondents were not aware that other forms existed or would be compared. Therefore, they could not intentionally or consciously change their answers in relation to the neutral form. Consequently, the validity of the SAS was calculated by the mean response differences among the three forms (Sedlacek & Brooks, 1976). The authors analyzed the results using multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) at the .05 level for form and

gender main effects. Due to the low number of responses from seniors, class rank was not included as an independent variable.

The SAS design in this study has been used in numerous studies intended to measure attitudes toward groups that are targets of prejudice, oppression, and, at times, hate crimes toward Blacks (Balenger, Hoffman & Sedlacek, 1992; White & Sedlacek, 1987), Arabs (Sergent, Woods, & Sedlacek, 1992), women (Minatoya & Sedlacek, 1983), and male student athletes (Engstrom & Sedlacek, 1993). The internal consistency reliability coefficients in these studies were in the .70 to .89 range.

RESULTS

Reliability

The internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's coefficient alpha) across forms was .85. The reliability estimates of the gay male form ranged from .68 in Situation 10 to .95, with a median of .94. The reliability estimates of the form assessing attitudes toward lesbians ranged from .68 in Situation 10 to .96 with a medium of .93. The reliability estimates (Cronbach's alpha) of the neutral form varied from .36 in Situation 10 to .91 across situations, with a median of .81. Thus, all situations except Situation 10 showed a high degree of internal consistency reliability.

Form Differences

The MANOVA was significant for the form main effect (Wilks's lambda=13.82, $p<.05$). According to the univariate F tests, total scores for 9 of the 10 situations revealed significant differences by form (see Table 1). The SAS Sexual Orientation means and standard deviation scores for each situation of all student participants also are found in Table 1.

The following situations presented in three different forms (neutral, gay male, and lesbian) showed significant differences by form: a new student moves next door; a student invites you to a bar; you walk by a male and female student holding hands outside the student union; a student asks you to work on a class project; the picture on a staff

member's desk is a significant other; your brother (sibling) calls to tell you about a new significant other; several classmates ask you to go to the football game; a student organization display case is vandalized; and a student is terminally ill. The one situation (item 4) that did not elicit significantly different attitudes for form effect was a student was physically assaulted on campus.

The Tukey HSD post hoc one-way comparison tests assisted in analyzing different patterns of between group significance (See Table 2). In all the situations list

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Insert Table 2 about here

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above, except Situation 9, the vandalized student organization display case situation, the attitudes toward both gay male and lesbian students were significantly more negative in magnitude than toward students whose sexual orientation was not specified. For example, in the new student moves next door incident, students expressed more negative feelings toward a gay male and lesbian student than toward a student whose sexual orientation was not mentioned. Student reactions to the bipolar adjectives on the Likert-type scales that followed the new student moving next door statement depicted greater feelings of "concern, nervousness, embarrassment, fearfulness, and anger" than the students who completed the neutral form. Responses to the bipolar adjectives on the Likert-type scale indicated that students were more "uncomfortable, embarrassed, disturbed, and anxious" when they were invited to either a gay or lesbian bar than those who were invited to a bar. Also, the situation in which two gay males or lesbians held hands outside the student union elicited reporting of greater feelings of "intolerance, disapproval, repulsion, discomfort, and abnormality" than a male and female student holding hands. Students were more "anxious, embarrassed, uneasy, and nervous" when they were asked by a gay male or lesbian student to work on a class project than when asked by a student whose sexual orientation was not specified.

In Situation 6, students reacted to a staff member showing a picture of a heterosexual significant other on the staff member's desk to be more "appropriate, accepting, right, and good" than when staff member shared the picture of a same-gender significant other. Participants also were more "shocked, devastated, or disturbed" when their sibling called to tell them about a same-gender significant other than when a sibling called to tell about a heterosexual partner. Students were more "anxious, embarrassed, uneasy, and scared" when invited to a football game with either a group of gay male or lesbian students. Finally, students were more "devastated and concerned" and reported feeling that the situation was less "fair or right" when a student whose sexual orientation was unspecified was terminally ill than when a gay male or lesbian student was dying. (Note: due to the low reliability of this latter situation, the results should be interpreted with caution.)

In Situation 9, respondents indicated feelings that were significantly less positive (e.g., understandable, good, right, pleased, tolerant) when they learned that a gay or lesbian student organization display case was vandalized than when the sexual orientation of the organization's membership was not indicated. Finally, participants expressed significantly more intense negative feelings toward gay male students than lesbian students in Situations 3, 6, and 8: two gay male or two lesbian students holding hands in front of the student union; a staff member informs you that the picture on the staff member's desk is a same-gender significant other; and a group of gay male or lesbian classmates ask you to go to the football game.

Gender differences

Significance at the .05 level was obtained for the gender main effect (Wilks's lambda=10.73, $p<.05$). The means and standard deviations for male and female students by form are presented in Table 3.

Insert Table 3 about here

Gender differences pertain only to the situations themselves, regardless of whether respondents were assigned the neutral, gay male, or lesbian forms. The following situations showed a gender significant effect in which female students consistently reported more desirable attitudes in their responses to the Likert-type scales than male students: you walk by a male and female student, two gay males, or two lesbians holding hands outside the student union; a student, gay male or lesbian student is sexually assaulted; a student, gay male or lesbian student asks you to work on a class project; the picture on a staff member's desk is the staff member's heterosexual or same-gender significant other; your sibling calls to tell you about a new heterosexual or same- gender significant other; several students, gay male or lesbian classmates ask you to go to the football game; a student, gay male or lesbian student organization display case is vandalized; and a student, gay male or lesbian resident is terminally ill.

Form-by-Gender Interaction

The MANOVA was significant for the form-by-gender effect (Wilks's lambda=1.58, $p<.05$). The six situations that elicited significant interaction effects included: a new student, gay male, or lesbian moves in next door; you walk by a male and female student or same-gender students holding hands outside the student union; a student, gay male, or lesbian asks you to work on a class project; your sibling calls to tell you about a heterosexual or same-gender significant other; several classmates, gay male classmates or lesbian classmates ask you to go to the football game; and the student, gay male or lesbian organization display case is vandalized (See Table 1).

Interaction effects indicate that female students expressed significantly more positive attitudes than their male peers when they responded to the neutral form in the situations cited in the preceding paragraph. In all these cases, <u>except</u> the vandalized

student organization display case item, female participants were more positive in their responses than male participants when the situations involved gay male students. In the following three situations, female students reported slightly more intense negative attitudes than their male peers in response to the lesbian form: (a) a new lesbian student moves in next door; (b) two women students holding hands outside the union; and (c) several classmates who are openly lesbian ask you to go to the football game. In the remaining three situations, male students who completed the lesbian form were less favorable in their responses than female students: (a) a lesbian student asks you to work on a class project; (b) your sister calls to tell you about her new girlfriend; and (c) the lesbian organization display case is vandalized.

The authors reviewed the means specific to each gender in the situations in which a form-by-gender interaction was found. Female participants who completed the neutral form for Situation 1, in which a new resident moves next door, reported the most positive, desirable feelings, followed by females who finished the gay male form. Females who completed the lesbian form reported the least positive feelings. This same pattern for females occurred in Situation 7 when a sibling calls to tell you about a new significant other. However, in Situation 3 when partners hold hands outside the student union, Situation 5 when you are asked by a peer to work on a class project, and Situation 8, when you are invited to a football game with a group of classmates, female participants reported the highest positive mean scores on the neutral form, followed by the mean scores on the lesbian form, while the lowest means scores were reported on the gay male form.

In the six situations that reported a gender-by-form interaction effect, only one pattern emerged for male participants: male students who completed the neutral form reported the highest mean scores; the mean scores of the male students who completed the gay male form were the lowest of all three forms.

DISCUSSION

This study confirms previous findings in the literature that indicate more intense negative prejudicial attitudes toward gay male and lesbian students exist (Herek, 1988; Kite, 1992; Rhoads, 1995; Sanford & Engstrom, 1995; Simoni, 1996) and that deeper homophobic feelings are held by male students than female students toward gay men (D'Augelli, 1989b; Kite, 1984; Sanford & Engstrom, 1995; Simoni, 1996). For the most part, attitudes of male and female students toward lesbians were similar across situations. In addition, the findings indicated that diverse situations elicited significantly different negative attitudes toward gay male and lesbian students than toward students whose sexual orientation was not specified. Finally, the magnitude of discomfort by male and female students toward gay male and lesbian students varied across situations.

Overall, this study demonstrates that the attitudes of male students in a wide variety of collegiate settings were consistently more negative toward gay men than toward lesbian women. Specifically, male college students felt uncomfortable, intolerant, and less accepting (i.e. group mean scores less than 30 out of 50) when reacting to situations requiring them to interact with gay males in public (e.g., being invited to a gay male bar; observing two gay men holding hands; working with a gay male on a class project; being invited to a football game with a group of gay men) and were "devastated" by the idea that a sibling could be involved in a same-gender relationship. Although previous studies reported male college students had more homophobic attitudes toward gay men than toward lesbians (Gentry, 1987; Herek, 1988; Kite, 1984; Whitley, 1988), the findings of this study clarified the range of situations in which these attitudes prevailed.

Gentry (1987) and Whitley (1988) found that women expressed more negative feelings toward lesbians than toward gay men. However, in this study, in which specific situations are described, for the most part women expressed more intense negative attitudes toward gay males than toward lesbians. Specifically, the attitudes of female

college student participants in situations involving public interactions in social, work, and academic settings involving gay male students were less supportive and tolerant than situations involving lesbian students. In only a few situations, (e.g., a sister calls to tell you about her new girlfriend; you are invited to a lesbian bar) do female students express, on the Likert-type scales provided in the survey, greater levels of discomfort, concern, and intolerance than the female students reacting to a brother calling about his boyfriend or being invited to a gay male bar. This study provides a richer picture of the situations in which discomfort occurs for heterosexual women, thereby highlighting concrete areas for further investigation.

It should be noted that both male and female students were outraged when a gay male, lesbian, or student whose sexual orientation was not specified was physically assaulted. Although, it is problematic to argue that a causal relationship exists between attitude measures and actual behavior (Ajzen & Fisbein, 1973), it is reassuring to learn that college students are angered, disturbed, and intolerant of physical abuse toward gay male or lesbian students. In addition, although group differences existed among the neutral, gay male, and lesbian forms, an examination of the group mean scores suggest that in many situations in the collegiate experience, students do not hold strong feelings of aversion, disgust, and intolerance of gay male and lesbian students. Students may not express total comfort or embrace the idea of gay male or lesbians interacting with them in academic or social environments, but they do not report excessive displeasure, concern, or anxiety. Some examples where group mean scores for females in this study were 30 or above (out of 50) included: a gay male or lesbian student moves next door; you see two women holding hands; a lesbian student asks you to work on a class project; and several lesbian students invite you to a football game.

IMPLICATIONS

This study demonstrated the importance of examining specific situations by gender to more fully understand the scope and context of prejudicial attitudes. There are

numerous implications for practice to consider from the results of this study, particularly in the areas of future research, programming, strategies for supporting gay male and lesbian college students, and policy development. The proposed action steps should be a part of an institutional commitment to create welcoming, supportive climates for all our students, regardless of their sexual orientation.

Future Research

Although significant form and form-by-gender effects were found, we can only speculate as to why differential attitudes existed. For example, why were heterosexual female students uncomfortable about going to a lesbian bar? Were they concerned that their own sexual orientation might be questioned? Were they afraid that someone might ask them out for a date? What factors contributed to the discomfort of heterosexual male students to be in public places with gay men? Are male college students particularly more sensitive to being labeled gay because they are anxious about their own sexuality and intimacy issues (Chickering & Reisser, 1994)? Do they believe, perhaps unconsciously, in the superiority of heterosexual intimate relationships and hold unfavorable dispositions toward people who do not fit societal norms? What contributes to the strong reactions by both male and female students to situations in which a relative indicates that he/she has a gay male or lesbian partner, or when they observe two gay men holding hands? The need to conduct qualitative studies that investigates factors contributing to students' discomfort toward gay males and lesbians in public, family, and classroom situations is warranted. More descriptive stories may provide a richer understanding of how heterosexist attitudes evolve, and if and how heterosexism, sexism, and sexuality might interrelate.

It would also be interesting to discover if any relationships exist between students' self-esteem and their attitudes toward gay and lesbians in some of the concrete situations included in this study. Using Herek's (1988) ATLGM scale, Simoni (1996) found a positive relationship existed between students' low self-esteem and having strong

heterosexist attitudes. In addition, higher self-esteem led to more positive contact with gay males and lesbians which, in turn, resulted in less heterosexist attitudes. Note, the heterosexist attitudes included in the ATLGM are rather generic and non-specific. To building upon the work of Simoni, student affairs professionals should ask if there is a relationship between the self-esteem of students and their attitudes when interacting with gay males and lesbian students in public, group gatherings? Is there a relationship between the self-esteem of students and their attitudes toward family members who reveal they are gay or lesbian? How does the gender of the heterosexual students impact the relationship? Does positive contact by heterosexual males and females with gay males and lesbian students result in less heterosexist attitudes in some situations and not in others?

In addition, since the findings of this research came from a sample comprised largely of freshmen and sophomore students, a study that examines differences between freshmen and seniors could help us understand how those attitudes might change over the college experience. Also, research that investigates attitudes toward gay males and lesbian students of color, students who are bisexual or transgendered students would address some of the diversity issues within the gay and lesbian culture. For example, Washington and Evans (1991) emphasized the need to explore the manner in which racism, heterosexism, and sexism intersect for gay and lesbian students of color.

Programming

Negative attitudes toward gay males and lesbian college students by a sample predominately of freshmen and sophomores supports D'Augelli and Rose's (1990) contention that targeted interventions should occur early in the college experience of students. Since students in their early college years did not express an overall strong aversion toward gay male and lesbian students, they may be open and responsive to interventions that encourage the development of supportive, accepting attitudes toward gay males and lesbians. At the most basic level, both heterosexual male and female

students can benefit from panel presentations with gay male and lesbian students from diverse backgrounds and experiences who are effective in confronting typical notions about who is a gay male or lesbian and how gay male or lesbian students behave (Croteau & Kusek, 1992). These presentations are low-risk ways to challenge students' current stereotypes. More substantial attitudinal change might emerge from opportunities to develop personal relationships and contact with same-sex lesbian or gay male peers (Hogan & Rentz, 1996; Simoni, 1996; Tierney, 1992) so that students' anxieties about personal interactions can be confronted. Programs and academic courses that focus on the relationship between sexism and heterosexism, in particular, and the interconnections among all forms of oppression (Pelligrini, 1992) are essential. Finally, Simoni's (1996) work reminds student affairs professionals that self-esteem is a critical building block that contributes to the ability of students to tolerate and appreciate differences.

Institutional support systems

Our results indicate that even the simplest of social interactions with gay male or lesbian students might elicit feelings of anxiety and concern among heterosexual students, particularly toward gay male students. Therefore, until heterosexual students work through these feelings, they may be unable to serve as allies for their gay and lesbian peers. Structured, visible, easily accessible support systems need to be created by student affairs administrators for gay males and lesbian students because peer and family supports may be absent. It is critical that role models who are heterosexual by available to challenge societal norms which dictate that everyone is or should be heterosexual (Herek, 1991; Lorde, 1985) and to share their vulnerabilities and anxieties about their own sexual identity. Students need to see friendships and respectful professional relationships between heterosexual administrators and lesbian and gay male colleagues.

The findings of this study suggest that we should advise gay male and lesbian students that many of their heterosexual peers do not hold strong, intolerant attitudes toward them; their heterosexual peers may feel discomfort and anxiety, but not repulsion.

While more intense negative feelings across diverse situations were expressed by heterosexual male and female students toward gay males than toward lesbians, gay and lesbians students might appreciate learning that most of their heterosexual peers expressed outrage at incidents of physical violence toward a gay male or lesbian student. These findings may influence the interaction patterns of gay male and lesbian students with these peers and may suggest ways in which gay males and lesbians may target efforts to educate the campus community.

Institutional policies

The ideas previously proposed, if implement, can contribute to eliminating individual manifestations of heterosexism (Herek, 1995), specifically individual held feelings of hatred, anger, or discomfort toward gay male or lesbian students just because of the sexual orientation of these students. However, as Herek noted, it is important to confront institutional structures which assume a heterosexist ideology. Equitable policies and procedures such as health care, insurance and tuition benefits, and access to recreational facilities for gay male or lesbian partners serve to challenge what are cultural givens and heterosexual privileges.

LIMITATIONS

There are a few limitation in this study. The results of Situation 10 should be taken with great caution due to the low reliability of the neutral form for this scale. In addition, as this study was conducted at only one institution (a large, public, research university), additional studies at different institutional types is warranted. Finally, the group data from this study did not account for individual difference. Herek (1984, 1988) found that individual variables such as age, level of education, amount of previous contact with gay male or lesbians, religion, level of authoritarianism, comfort level with sexuality, and overall level of prejudice toward different groups influence the degree to which people respond to gay males and lesbians as individuals rather than people from a disliked, oppressed group.

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Table 1

SAS Sexual Orientation Situation Mean and Standard Deviations of Residence Hall Students

		Neutral n = 71		Gay n = 76		Lesbian n = 77		
	Situation	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	Significance
1.	A new student (who others say is gay, lesbian) moves into the room next door.	38.18	4.06	31.46	7.79	33.63	7.19	F, FxG
2.	A (male, female) student invites you to go to a bar (that has a reputation as a "gay and lesbian" bar).	34.18	6.20	24.11	7.10	25.28	7.34	F
3.	You walk by a male and female (two male, two female) students sitting on a bench holding hands outside the student union.	41.22	6.66	24.65	11.80	31.07	9.73	F, G, FxG
4.	You hear that a student (gay male, lesbian) on your campus was physically assaulted.	41.16	4.63	40.00	6.99	40.82	5.81	G
5.	A student (male, female) student (who is openly gay, who is openly a lesbian) asks you if you are interested in working on the class project and presentation (assignments that are required to be completed in pairs).	38.91	6.08	29.80	9.10	32.50	8.46	F, G, FxG
6.	You meet the new staff member at work. You comment on a nice picture on his (his, her) desk and he (he, she) informs you that the woman (the man, the woman) in the picture is his girlfriend (boyfriend, girlfriend).	42.05	6.77	27.35	10.28	31.10	9.36	F, G
7.	Your brother (brother, sister) calls to tell you about his (his, her) new girlfriend (boyfriend, girlfriend).	41.82	5.68	22.17	10.72	23.84	11.00	F, G, FxG
8.	Several (male, female) classmates (who are openly gay, lesbian) ask you to go to the football game.	42.12	5.52	26.60	9.10	31.26	9.10	F,G, FxG

Table 1 (continued)

SAS Sexual Orientation Situation Mean and Standard Deviations of Residence Hall Students

Situation		Neutral n = 71 M	Neutral n = 71 SD	Gay n = 76 M	Gay n = 76 SD	Lesbian n = 77 M	Lesbian n = 77 SD	Significance
9.	One of the display cases filled with information (about the gay, about the lesbian) student organization was vandalized.	41.53	5.60	31.56	10.81	39.24	9.46	F,G FxG
10.	You learn that a (male, female) resident down the hall (who is openly gay, who is openly (lesbian) is terminally ill.	38.80	3.91	32.62	7.11	36.16	5.95	F, G

Note: Scale ranges: 50 = most positive, most desirable attitudes; 10 = most negative, least desirable attitudes

* $p<.05$ using MANOVA

F = significant effect for form; G = significant effect for gender; FxG = significant effect for form-by-gender interaction.

Table 2

Patterns of Between Group Significance on Items Showing Overall Significant Differences[a]

Item No.	Situation[b]	Significant Post Hoc Comparisons
1[c]	New (gay, lesbian) student moves into the room next door.	Student in general vs. gay student Student in general vs. lesbian student
2	Invited to a (gay, lesbian) bar.	Bar vs. gay bar Bar vs. lesbian bar
3[c]	A male and female (2 males; 2 females) student are holding hands in front of the student union.	A male and female student vs. 2 gay students A male and female student vs. 2 lesbian students Two lesbian students vs. 2 gays students
5[c]	A student (who is gay, who is lesbian) asks you to work on class project.	Student in general vs. gay student Student in general vs. lesbian student
6	You meet the new staff member. He (he, she) informs you that the woman (man, woman) in the picture on his desk is his girlfriend (boyfriend, girlfriend).	His girlfriend vs. his boyfriend His girlfriend vs. her girlfriend Her girlfriend vs. his boyfriend
7[c]	Brother (brother, sister) calls to tell you about his new girlfriend (boyfriend, boyfriend).	His girlfriend vs. his boyfriend His girlfriend vs. her girlfriend
8[c]	Classmates (who are gay, who are lesbian) ask you to go to the football game.	Classmates vs. gay classmates Classmates vs. lesbian classmates Lesbian vs. gay classmates
9[c]	Display case filled with information about (the gay, the lesbian) student organization was vandalized.	Student organization in general vs. Gay student organization
10	A (male, female) resident (who is gay, who is lesbian) is terminally ill.	Resident in general vs. gay resident Resident in general vs. lesbian resident

Table 2 (continued)

Note: First group generated significantly more positive, more desirable attitudes than the second group listed.

[a] Overall F significant (.05 level) using Tukey HSD post hoc tests.

[b] See Table 1 for complete wording of situations.

[c] Also had a significant form-by-gender interaction effect at the .05 level.

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations by Gender of SAS Gay Male and Lesbian Situation Scores

	WOMEN						MEN					
	Neutral n = 37		Gay n = 37		Lesbian n = 41		Neutral n = 34		Gay n = 39		Lesbian n = 36	
Situation[a]	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
1	38.16	4.91	33.81	7.84	32.63	8.14	38.20	2.99	29.44	7.31	34.25	6.13
2	34.89	7.84	33.81	8.54	24.29	7.43	33.53	6.49	22.59	5.31	25.44	6.50
3	41.78	6.02	25.73	11.13	30.87	11.27	40.73	6.71	23.51	11.02	31.28	7.73
4	44.21	4.24	44.29	4.18	43.39	4.18	38.03	3.86	35.20	9.39	38.33	6.40
5	40.60	5.38	33.62	8.91	32.83	9.76	37.15	6.42	26.51	8.00	31.97	7.05
6	42.40	7.47	30.38	10.24	31.88	10.46	41.62	5.99	24.28	9.56	29.97	8.26
7	43.76	4.24	27.89	10.36	25.58	11.95	40.26	5.98	16.72	8.15	21.78	10.66
8	43.22	4.88	28.89	8.91	30.66	10.60	41.21	5.94	22.67	7.51	31.86	7.07
9	43.46	5.09	30.89	5.69	42.00	7.97	39.41	5.56	32.10	11.49	36.75	9.59
10	39.43	3.85	32.10	6.08	37.39	4.69	38.17	3.94	32.94	7.68	34.75	6.36

Note: Scale ranges: 50 = most positive, desirable attitudes; 10 = most negative, least desirable attitudes

[a] See Table 1 for complete wording of situations.

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